

**United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development**Distr.: General
21 September 2018

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Working Party on the Strategic Framework
and the Programme Budget
Seventy-sixth session
Geneva, 3–5 September 2018**Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework
and the Programme Budget on its seventy-sixth session****Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 3 to 5 September 2018****Contents**

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I. Action taken by the Working Party at its seventy-sixth session

A. Agreed conclusions on the evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 4)

The Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of evaluations as a powerful tool for accountability and organizational learning and for further improving results-based management at UNCTAD in line with United Nations guidelines;
2. *Commends* the subprogramme 5 independent evaluation team for a useful and insightful report;
3. *Looks forward to* the implementation of the subprogramme 5 evaluation recommendations by the secretariat and the subsequent presentation of the evaluation follow-up at its seventy-eighth session in September 2019;
4. *Appreciates* the efforts made by the secretariat in implementing the recommendations of subprogramme 4;
5. *Requests* the secretariat, by way of stocktaking, to present, during its seventy-eighth session, a review of the evaluation findings from the five subprogramme evaluations conducted to date and an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations from the five evaluations;
6. *Requests* the secretariat to continue its subprogramme evaluation approach after the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and to focus on streamlining costs and fundraising extrabudgetary resources for this purpose, taking into account the outcome of the review of the evaluation findings in 2019.

B. Other action taken by the Working Party

1. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

(Agenda item 3)

1. At its closing plenary, the Working Party took note of the document TD/B/WP/290.

2. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 4)

2. At its closing plenary, the Working Party took note of the documents TD/B/WP/291 and TD/B/WP/292. The Working Party adopted agreed conclusions on this agenda item.

II. Chair's summary

A. Proceedings

1. The seventy-sixth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was held in Geneva from 3 to 5 September 2018. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

B. Opening statements

2. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made a statement. Statements were made by the representatives of the following delegations: Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; the Sudan on behalf of the African Group; China; Iraq; Nigeria; and Kenya.

3. In her statement, the Deputy Secretary-General noted the ongoing reform at the United Nations and highlighted UNCTAD efforts to reposition itself, as a non-resident entity, to best respond to the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Technical cooperation was an important vehicle in assisting developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In that context, UNCTAD was making continuous efforts to ensure that technical cooperation was more transparent and accountable. With regard to delivery, the Deputy Secretary-General stated that, in 2017, overall technical cooperation expenditures had risen to \$40 million, mainly directed to the most vulnerable countries.

4. The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that the increase in technical cooperation activities had not been matched by a similar rise in voluntary contributions. In 2017, overall voluntary funding to trust funds had been about \$35 million, 12 per cent less than in 2016, due to a reduction in voluntary funding from both developed and developing countries. Contributions from developed countries had decreased by 30 per cent, compared with contributions in 2016. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that, to effectively respond to requests received from developing countries, UNCTAD required increased financial support, including non-earmarked and multi-year contributions from member States and all development partners, to help increase the impact and predictability of technical cooperation. UNCTAD intended to establish regular consultations with member States, in order to work together with donors to define a holistic approach that could allow UNCTAD to reach its full potential in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

5. Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the importance of partnerships, and stressed that the UNCTAD-led United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity had been shown to be an adequate mechanism to effectively help achieve the Goals, which required coordinated and integrated responses. The Deputy Secretary-General requested member States to contribute to the proposed multi-donor trust fund on trade and productive capacity of the Inter-Agency Cluster, coordinated by UNCTAD.

6. Some delegates stressed the key role of technical cooperation in delivering UNCTAD expertise on trade and development and enhancing the capacities of developing countries to achieve the Goals. A few of these delegates emphasized that UNCTAD should continue to enhance the synergies between technical cooperation and the other two pillars of the work of UNCTAD, namely research and analysis and consensus-building. In addition, a few delegates requested clarifications on the reform of the United Nations development system and of country teams, in particular with regard to the effects on the provision of technical cooperation by UNCTAD, as a non-resident entity; the regular budget dedicated to technical cooperation; and future approaches to be taken in interregional projects and collaboration with the regional commissions of the United Nations.

1. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

(Agenda item 3)

7. The Working Party considered the document "Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing" and its annexes (TD/B/WP/290, TD/B/WP/290/Add.1 and TD/B/WP/290/Add.2).

8. With regard to the funding of UNCTAD technical cooperation, several delegates expressed concerns about the decrease in voluntary funding to UNCTAD trust funds in 2017, which would adversely impact the delivery of technical cooperation. Many developing countries had used self-funding options to benefit from technical cooperation, yet limited financial resources in developing countries and vulnerable

countries such as the least developed countries led to continued reliance on the support of development partners to finance technical cooperation projects. One delegate noted that although contributions from developed countries had decreased overall in 2017, some countries in the European Union had increased their contributions and developed countries and related organizations represented the largest group of outward-bound contributors. Some delegates, exploring different options for funding mobilization to better serve the needs of developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, requested donors to enhance funding support to UNCTAD and stated that UNCTAD should explore alternative funding modalities and mechanisms to ensure more predictable funding for technical cooperation activities. A few delegates suggested developing, in consultation with member States, a funding strategy or using a new funding mechanism to help UNCTAD bridge the funding gap. One delegate encouraged developing countries in a position to do so to continue to fund technical cooperation activities, notably with regard to South-South cooperation. In addition, a few delegates stated that UNCTAD could seek new partnerships with and donors from the private sector or foundations, as complementary sources of funding.

9. A few delegates, with regard to the repositioning of UNCTAD to make its technical cooperation fit for purpose, highlighted the role of the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox* in mainstreaming achievement of the Goals into technical cooperation. One delegate stressed that the secretariat should further mainstream results-based management and gender aspects into technical cooperation activities, including the full use of results-based management across UNCTAD, setting specific and measurable targets to achieve gender-related objectives and linking gender with the results-based management approach to ensure that projects and programmes engaged with gender aspects in a substantial way. Some delegates highlighted the importance of inter-agency and interdivisional cooperation and acknowledged the continuing efforts of UNCTAD in these areas. A few delegates noted the work by the secretariat on a technical cooperation request database. In this regard, one delegate indicated a few areas that could be further improved, such as the provision of budget estimates for all formal requests in the database and regular updates on the status of requests. In addition, another delegate requested clarification on the number of pending projects and requests in the database.

10. With regard to target areas for technical cooperation, some delegates noted the efforts made by the secretariat to deliver projects on science and technology policies, electronic commerce readiness and trade facilitation, and highlighted their support for the effective implementation of paragraph 38 (r) of the Nairobi Maafikiano on the trade and development impact of non-tariff barriers. A few delegates noted that UNCTAD could enhance funding in some emerging areas, such as electronic commerce and the digital economy, as well as on issues related to youth. One delegate requested clarifications on how UNCTAD would address increased requests for technical cooperation in the area of frontier technologies, in particular from developing countries, and another delegate emphasized that UNCTAD should increase its focus on technical cooperation in this and also include youth and gender markers in technical cooperation programmes.

11. The Working Party did not reach an agreement upon a draft decision on the review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing.

2. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities

(Agenda item 4)

12. The Working Party considered the documents "Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview" (TD/B/WP/291), which summarized the findings and lessons learned from three evaluations completed in April 2017–April 2018 and provided guidance to management on implementing subprogrammes based on evidence generated by the evaluations; and "External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 5: Africa, least developed countries and special programmes" which presented the results of the evaluation team and seven recommendations for implementation under the subprogramme, as well as the management response to the external evaluation and the supporting materials for the evaluation (TD/B/WP/292, TD/B/WP(76)/CRP.1 and TD/B/WP(76)/CRP.2).

13. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the overview of the evaluation of UNCTAD activities could contribute towards allowing member States to engage in the continuous improvement of the performance of UNCTAD, in particular as the trial cycle of subprogramme evaluations had concluded. The Deputy Secretary-General stated that the secretariat proposed to present, at the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party to be held in September 2019, a review of the evaluation findings from the five subprogramme evaluations conducted to date and an update on the status of implementation of the recommendations from the five evaluations. This stocktaking exercise would provide an opportunity for member States to consider the approach that had been piloted to evaluate the subprogrammes, following which the secretariat proposed to continue the subprogramme evaluations, starting with subprogramme I in 2021, following the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 2020. Finally, the Deputy Secretary-General requested delegates to expand their support to evaluations to enable UNCTAD to expand its evaluation coverage, strengthen the evaluation culture and respond to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, including at the national level.

14. One delegate highlighted that clear and transparent evaluations were fundamental in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Goals; that the secretariat should leverage additional resources to encompass evaluations in other areas and extend its coverage to the work of the entire organization, as evaluations were a key part of any management function; and that the cycle of subprogramme evaluations should be restarted once the results of the current cycle, along with the processes and methodologies, had been assessed.

15. A few delegates noted the need for increased thematic continuity in research that would facilitate policy discussions. A few other delegates stated that the secretariat should continue to increase efforts to enhance inter-agency and interdivisional cooperation and that an overarching road map for increased partnerships and collaborations at the institutional level should be developed with other United Nations agencies, including those that could support increased participation by UNCTAD in the workplans of country teams. A few delegates expressed support for a proposal to carry out a meta evaluation to assess the implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations. Some delegates noted that greater attention should be given to the integration of gender and human rights aspects in subprogrammes and that there was room for improvement in focusing on these two aspects and on highlighting UNCTAD efforts in this direction. One delegate noted that the evaluation team could have focused on UNCTAD work that impacted human rights through economic empowerment and poverty alleviation, which were directly related to the right to development, and stated that UNCTAD should pay attention to this aspect when assessing the status of implementation of the recommendations.

16. With regard to evaluation follow-ups, one delegate stated that they should be conducted in a transparent and structured manner. In this regard, the secretariat noted that recommendations remained highly relevant and were followed up on by the relevant divisions. With regard to a query on whether a follow-up mechanism was in place for science, technology and innovation policy reviews, the secretariat noted that before implementing a review, the responsible division held consultations with the requesting country to assess readiness to undertake the necessary steps and to ensure that the review would fit national policies. Follow-up reviews were conducted after five years, for example as currently being implemented in Oman. With regard to a query on whether mobile or offline versions had been developed for the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the secretariat stated that a mobile version was in development, yet there were difficulties with developing updated versions, as the system was self-financed by countries and funding was generally only available to operationalize the system within the funding country. Finally, with regard to a request for clarification on technical cooperation on financing for development, the secretariat noted that ASYCUDA was a good example of such cooperation and that preparation was in progress of an analytical document on how ASYCUDA could help in raising funds in countries implementing the software.

III. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers

(Agenda item 1)

17. At the opening plenary meeting, on 3 September 2018, the Working Party elected Ms. Charline van der Beek (Austria) as its Chair.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

18. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WP/289). The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers;
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work;
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing;
4. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities:
 - (a) Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview;
 - (b) External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 5: Africa, least developed countries and special programmes;
 - (c) Follow-up on evaluations: Progress report on the implementation of recommendations from the external evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 4: Technology and logistics;
5. Provisional agenda for the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party;
6. Other business;
7. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

C. Provisional agenda for the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 5)

19. At its closing plenary meeting, on 5 September 2018, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its seventy-seventh session (see annex I).

D. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 7)

20. At the same meeting, the Working Party decided that the report on its seventy-sixth session would be finalized after the session.

Annex I

Provisional agenda for the seventy-seventh session of the Working Party

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the draft UNCTAD programme plan and performance information for the year 2020 (part II of the proposed programme budget)
4. Provisional agenda for the seventy-eighth session of the Working Party
5. Other business
6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

Annex II

Attendance¹

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Working Party attended the session:

Algeria	India
Austria	Nigeria
Brazil	Pakistan
China	Panama
Ecuador	United States of America
Finland	

2. Representatives of the following States members of UNCTAD but not members of the Working Party attended the session:

Barbados	Jordan
Bulgaria	Kenya
Cameroon	Nepal
Canada	Oman
Costa Rica	Peru
Cuba	Philippines
Czechia	Poland
Côte d'Ivoire	Spain
Djibouti	Sudan
Egypt	Turkey
Estonia	Ukraine
Guatemala	Yemen
Islamic Republic of Iran	Zambia
Iraq	

3. Representatives of the following Member of the Conference attended the session:

State of Palestine

4. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
European Union

¹ This attendance list contains registered participants. For the full list of participants, see TD/B/WP(76)/INF.1.